

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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R 241542Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6306
INFO USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 1353

EXDIS

FOR ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, CU, UY
SUBJECT: POSSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL PRISONER EXCHANGE

REF: A) HAVANA 0981 B) 77 STATE 170677 C) 77 MONTEVIDEO 2897

1. ANY PROPOSAL OR DEVICE WHICH OFFERS A POSSIBILITY OF
BREAKING THE POLITICAL PRISONER LOGJAM HERE MERITS SERIOUS
CONSIDERATION. BUT THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES WHICH WE FORESEE
IN ANY PRISONER EXCHANGE PROPOSAL. EXHCNAGES ARE NOT A NEW
IDEA FOR URUGUAY. THE PAST EXPERIENCE OF THE GOU (IN ACTUAL
AND PROPOSED PRISONER EXCHANGES) HAS LEFT A SOUR TASTE, AND
WILL COLOR ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD ANY NEW PROPOSAL.
HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE OF GOU PERSONALITIES AND
THERE MAY BE A SHIFT OF INTERESTS WHICH COULD MAKE AN EXCHANGE
POSSIBLE AT THIS TIME. NONETHELESS BECAUSE OF PAST HISTORY,
IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE FASHION A PACKAGE WHICH IS ATTRACTIVE AND
STANDS ON ITS OWN, WITH THE FOUR AMERICAN "POLITICIAL PRISONERS"
ONLY A MINOR ELEMENT. THE PACKAGE MUST PROVIDE TO PRIME
MOVERS WITHIN THE GOU A SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL PAY-OFF;

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LEND ITSELF TO PORTRAYAL ITERNALLY AS SOLVING A PRACTICAL
PROBLEM OF RELEASING UNDESIRABLE SUBVERSIVES; AND BE VIEWED
AS A CLEVER DEVICE TO WIN A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND TACTICAL VICTORY
OVER THE COMMUNISTS. FINALLY, THE MODALITIES OF EXCHANGE MUST
ALSO BE CAREFULLY CRAFTED.

2. CLIMATE: THE GOU HAS NOT YET ABANDONDED THE IDEA THAT

IT IS ENGAGED IN A WAR AGAINST INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM, AND THAT A THREAT TO URUGUAYAN SECURITY CONTINUES TO EXIST. NEVERTHELESS, SOME KEY GOU FIGURES MIGHT BE INTRIGUED BY A PRISONER EXCHANGE AS A MEANS OF REDUCING THE POLITICAL PRISONER BURDEN. AS NOTED ABOVE, THEY WOULD ONLY DEAL IF CONVINCED THAT INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR A HUMANITARIAN ACT WAS A CERTAINTY, AND IF THE PRISONER EXCHANGE COULD BE PORTRAYED AS A SECURITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COUP.

3. URUGUAYAN EXPERIENCE: THE GOU'S PAST EXPERIENCE WITH PROPOSED AND ACTUAL PRISONER EXCHANGES HAS BEEN NEGATIVE. IN JANUARY 1975, RODNEY ARISMENDI, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PCU AND ONE OF THE FOREMOST COMMUNIST LEADERS IN THE HEMISPHERE WAS RELEASED AND PERMITTED TO TRAVEL TO MOSCW. IN EXCHANGE, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE SOVIET UNION PROMISED A SUBSTANTIAL PURCHASE OF URUGUAYAN MEAT (AT LEAST 50,000 TONS) AND ARISMENDI PROMISED TO DESIST FROM ATTACKING URUGUAY. NEITHER CONDITION WAS FULFILLED. IN JUNE 1977, BILL LUERS, RESPONDING TO A SOVIET FEELER, PROPOSED AN EXCHANGE OF URUGUAYAN POLITICAL PRISONERS FOR SOVIET DISSIDENTS TO GOU AMBASSADOR PEREZ CALDAS. THE OFFER WAS BADLY GARBLED -- OR, MORE LIKELY, DISTORTED -- AS IT MOVED THROUGH THE GOU. AS A RESULT, THE USG WAS SEEN AS UNILATERALLY PROPOSING THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS CONSIDERED BY THE GOU TO BE VERY DANGEROUS TO THE SECURITY OF THE STATE. CONSEQUENTLY, FAVORABLE ACTION WAS NEVER SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED AND THE GOU WAS FORCED
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TO TAKE A POSITION ON PRISONER EXCHANGE WHICH SITS A NEGATIVE PRECEDENT (REF C). MOST RECENTLY, THE RELEASE OF BRAZILIAN JOURNALIST FLAVIO TAVARES ALLEGEDLY WAS CONDITIONED BY THE PROMISE THAT HE WOULD MAKE NO STATEMENTS REGARDING MISTREATMENT AFTER HIS RELEASE. HE VIOLATED THIS "UNDERSTANDING" AS SOON AS HIS PLANE TOUCHED DOWN IN LISBON. AS A RESULT OF THESE EXPERIENCES WE ARE FACED WITH A GOU WHICH IS BOTH SKEPTICAL ABOUT AND LOCKED INTO A NEGATIVE POSITION ON PRISONER EXCHANGES.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 1353

EXDIS

FOR ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN

4. USG INTERESTS. THE RECENT ABA VISIT GIVES PROMISE OF BRINGING A BREAKTHROUGH HERE ON HUMAN RIGHTS. PUBLIC DIALOGUE WAS STIMULATED AND THE GOU'S MILITARY LEADERSHIP COMMITTED ITSELF TO SIGNIFICANT AND FAVORABLE MODIFICATIONS OF CURRENT POLICIES AFFECTING HUMAN RIGHTS. THE KEY FIGURE BEHIND THIS OPENING, ARMY CINC ALVAREZ, HAD TO FACE DOWN STRONG OPPOSITION FROM THE ULTRA-RIGHT. THIS OPPOSITION CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE, PERHAPS EVEN INCREASE, AS REFORMS ARE PUT INTO EFFECT. ANY PROPOSAL FOR PRISONER EXCHANGE WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY FASHIONED TO PROVIDE A DOMESTIC PUBLIC-RELATIONS PAY-OFF AND INTERNATIONAL APPLAUSE TO ALVAREZ AND THE MODERATES. IT UNLIKELY THAT ALVAREZ WOULD TAKE THE RISK OTHERWISE. WE CONTINUE TO VIEW OUR INTERESTS AS, AT LEAST MOMENTARILY, ALIGNED WITH THOSE OF ALVAREZ. INDEED, HE IS UNDER ATTACK IN LARGE PART BECAUSE HE IS VIEWED AS FOLLOWING OUR DICTATES ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THE ART, IN THIS CASE, IS TO CALCULATE OUR INVOLVEMENT IN A PRISONER-EXCHANGE PROPOSAL SO THAT IT BREAKS THE POLITICAL PRISONER LOG JAM THE GOU HAS CREATED FOR ITSELF WITHOUT PREJUDICING OUR LONGER-TERM HUMAN RIGHTS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

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5. THE PACKAGE: TO ATTRACT THE URUGUAYANS, THE EXCHANGE PACKAGE WOULD HAVE TO BE BROADENED BEYOND THE FOUR AMERICAN CITIZENS IMPRISONER IN CUBA. SOME KNOWN LATIN FIGURES -- HUBER MATOS COMES TO MIND -- WOULD BE NEEDED. AN EXPANSION OF THE PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE SOVIET DISSIDENTS MIGHT ALSO BE CONSIDERED. (NOTE: IDEA OF A SWAP OF ANATOLY SHCHARANSKY FOR JOSE LUIS MASSERA, RENOWNED MATHEMATICIAN AND FORMER PCU FIRST SECRETARY WAS DISCUSSED DURING MARCH VISIT OF NAS, WHICH IS SEEKING RELEASE OF BOTH. SUCH AN EXHCHANGE, HOWEVER, WAS NOT PROPOSED TO THE GOU.) AND IF THE URUGUAYANS SERIOUSLY

DESIRE TO COUNTERACT RECENT, RELATIVELY SMALL-SCALE LOCAL INCIDENTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM, THEY MIGHT BE INDUCED TO ASK FOR THE FREEDOM TO EMIGRATE OF SOME SOVIET JEWS. AS FOR THE URUGUAYANS TO BE SWAPPED, WE WOULD PROPOSE THE INCLUSION OF COMMUNIST ARTY (PCU) AND HIGH-PROFILE HUMAN RIGHTS CASES, RATHER THAN TUPAMAROS. SENDIC'S NAME DEFINITELY SHOULD NOT BE RAISED EARLY ON IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS. HE IS THE NUMBER ONE TERRORIST, NOT A PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE. HIS NAME RAISES HACKLES HERE AS NO OTHER, AND COULD ONLY BE RAISED (IF AT ALL) ONCE THE GOU WAS ROMANCED WITH THE IDEA OF AN EXCHANGE. MORE LOGICAL NAMES WOULD BE THOSE OF MASSERA, JAIME GERSHUNI PEREZ (EX-DEPTY AND MEMBER OF PSU SECRETARIAT); MIGUEL ANGEL ESTRELLA (ARGENTINE CONCERT PIANIST AND MONTONERO COLLABORATOR IMPRISONED HEREL; AND THOSE PERSONS IN WHOE CASES THE ABA MISSION TOOK PARTICULAR INTEREST, SUCH AS ANA INES QUADROS AND GLADYS WARDA (DAUGHTER OF A U.S. CITIZEN). PRISONERS INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE A PLACE TO GO. THE URUGUAYANS NOTED WOULD LIKELY PREFER EXILE IN EUROPE, THE U.S. OR ELSEWHERE IN LATIN AMERICA, TO LIFE IN CUBA.

6. MODALITIES: OUR FIRST STEP SHOULD BE TO FASHION A CREDIBLE AND BALANCED PACKAGE BASED ON THE ASSESSMENTS OF THOSE
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CONCERNED WITH CUBAN AND SOVIET AFFAIRS AS TO WHOSE RELEASE COULD BE NEGOTIATED FOR URUGUAYAN PRISONERS SHORT OF RAUL SENDIC. NEXT WE MUST DETERMINE WHERE TO MAKE THE FIRST APPROACH. I FAVOR BEGINNING WITH ONE PARTY.

IT CANNOT REPEAT CANNOT BE URUGUAY BECAUSE WE WILL IMMEDIATELY BE CONFRONTED WITH THE PRECEDENT OF AN ESTABLISHED GOU POSITION OPPOSING PRISONER SWAPS. PERHAPS WE SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE SOVIETS, WHO SHOWED SOME INTEREST LAST YEAR, AND GET THEM TO ENGAGE THEIR CUBAN CLIENTS. IF THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS SHOW INTEREST AND WE ALSO FIND SOME SYMPATHY HERE, WE MAY WANT TO CONSIDER DRAWING BACK AND LETTING A PRIVATE INSTITUTION (SUCH AS THE NAS), A PRESTIGIOUS LEGISLATOR WITH INTERESTS IN THIS FIELD SUCH AS SENATOR MCGOVERN, A PROMINENT LAWYER, OR SIMILAR FIGURE BE THE INTERMEDIARY IN FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS.
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